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## Biden takes the helm as president: 'Democracy has prevailed'

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, ZEKE MILLER and ALEXANDRA JAFFE

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th president of the United States on Wednesday, declaring that "democracy has prevailed" and summoning American resilience and unity to confront the deeply divided nation's historic confluence of crises. Biden took the oath at a U.S. Capitol that had been battered by an insurrectionist siege just two weeks earlier.

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Joe Biden is sworn in as the 46th president of the United States by Chief Justice John Roberts as Jill Biden holds the Bible during the 59th Presidential Inauguration at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2021, as their children Ashley and Hunter watch.

Associated Press

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# Biden takes the helm as president: 'Democracy has prevailed'



President Joe Biden waits to sign his first executive order in the Oval Office of the White House on Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

## Continued from Front

On a cold Washington morning dotted with snow flurries, the quadrennial ceremony unfolded within a circle of security forces evocative of a war zone and devoid of crowds because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Instead, Biden gazed out over 200,000 American flags planted on the National Mall to symbolize those who could not attend in person.

"The will of the people has been heard, and the will of the people has been heeded. We've learned again that democracy is precious and democracy is fragile. At this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed," Biden said. "This is America's day. This is democracy's day. A day in history and hope, of renewal and resolve."

History was made at his side, as Kamala Harris became the first woman to be vice president. The former

U.S. senator from California is also the first Black person and the first person of South Asian descent elected to the vice presidency and the highest-ranking woman ever to serve in the U.S. government.

Biden never mentioned his predecessor, who defied tradition and left town ahead of the ceremony, but his speech was an implicit rebuke of Donald Trump. The new president denounced "lies told for power and for profit" and was blunt about the challenges ahead.

Central among them: the surging virus that has claimed more than 400,000 lives in the United States, as well as economic strains and a national reckoning over race.

"We have much to do in this winter of peril, and significant possibilities. Much to repair, much to restore, much to heal, much to build and much to gain," Biden said. "Few people in our nation's history have been more challenged, or found a time more challenging or difficult than the

time we're in now."

Biden was eager to go big early, with an ambitious first 100 days including a push to speed up the distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations to anxious Americans and pass a \$1.9 trillion economic relief package. On Day One, as part of a push to roll back Trump administration initiatives, he signed a series of executive actions, including to re-enter the Paris Climate Accords and to mandate mask wearing on federal property.

"There's no time to start like today," Biden said as he signed the actions in the Oval Office.

The absence of Biden's predecessor from the inaugural ceremony underscored the national rift to be healed.

But a bipartisan trio of former presidents — Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama — were there to witness the ceremonial transfer of power. Trump, awaiting his second impeachment trial, was at his Florida resort by the time the swearing-in took place. Biden, in his third run for the presidency, staked his candidacy less on any distinctive political ideology than on galvanizing a broad coalition of voters around the notion that Trump posed an existential threat to American democracy. Four years after Trump's "American Carnage" speech painted a dark portrait of national decay, Biden warned that the fabric of the nation's democracy was tearing but expressed faith that it could be repaired.

"I know the forces that divide us are deep and they are real. But I also know they are not new. Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we are all created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, demonization have long torn us apart," Biden said. "This is our historic moment of crisis and challenge, and unity is the path forward and we must meet this moment as the United States of America."

Swearing the oath with his

hand on a five-inch-thick Bible that has been in his family for 128 years, Biden came to office with a well of empathy and resolve born by personal tragedy as well as a depth of experience forged from more than four decades in Washington. At age 78, he is the oldest president inaugurated. Both he, Harris and their spouses walked the last short part of the route to the White House after an abridged parade. Biden then strode into the Oval Office, a room he knew well as vice president, for the first time as commander in chief.

Earlier, the two were sworn in during an inauguration ceremony with few parallels. Biden, like all those in attendance, wore a face mask except when speaking. And tens of thousands of National Guard troops were on the streets to provide security precisely two weeks after a violent mob of Trump supporters, incited by the Republican president, stormed the Capitol in an attempt to prevent the certification of Biden's victory. "Here we stand, just days after a riotous mob thought they could use violence to silence the will of the people," Biden said. "To stop the work of our democracy. To drive us from this sacred ground. It did not happen. It will never happen. Not today, not tomorrow. Not ever. Not ever."

The tense atmosphere evoked the 1861 inauguration of Abraham Lincoln, who was secretly transported to Washington to avoid assassins on the eve of the Civil War, or Franklin Roosevelt's inaugural in 1945, when he opted for a small, secure ceremony at the White House in the waning months of World War II. But Washington, all but deserted downtown and in its federal areas, was quiet.

And calm also prevailed outside heavily fortified state Capitol buildings across nation after the FBI had warned of the possibility for armed demonstrations leading up to the inauguration. □

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## Democrats gaining Senate control as new members take oath

By **LISA MASCARO** AP Congressional Correspondent  
**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Three

new senators were sworn into office Wednesday after President Joe Biden's inauguration, securing the majority for Democrats in the Senate and across a unified government to tackle the new president's agenda at a time of unprecedented national challenges.

Vice President Kamala Harris drew applause as she entered the chamber to deliver the oath of office to the new Democratic senators — Jon Ossoff, Raphael Warnock and Alex Padilla — just hours after taking her own oath at the Capitol alongside Biden. The three Democrats join a Senate narrowly split 50-50 between the parties, but giving Democrats the majority with Harris able to cast the tie-breaking vote.

"Today, America is turning over a new leaf. We are turning the page on the last four years, we're going to reunite the country, defeat COVID-19, rush economic relief to the people," Ossoff told reporters earlier at the Capitol. "That's what they sent us here to do."

Ossoff, a former congressional aide and investigative journalist, and Warnock, a pastor from the late Martin Luther King Jr.'s church in Atlanta, won run-off elections in Georgia this month, defeating two Republicans. Padilla was tapped by California's governor to



Associated Press

finish the remainder of Harris' term — drawing chuckles from the new vice president as she read aloud the official documentation.

Taken together, their arrival gives Democrats for the first time in a decade control of the Senate, the House and the White House, as Biden faces the unparalleled challenges of the COVID-19 crisis and its economic fallout, and the nation's painful political divisions from the deadly Jan. 6 siege of the Capitol by a mob loyal to Donald Trump.

The pandemic has claimed 400,000 American lives, and Biden is proposing a \$1.9 trillion recovery package to distribute vaccines and shore up an economy struggling from the virus shutdowns. At the same

time, the Senate is about to launch an impeachment trial of Trump, charged by the House of inciting the insurrection at the Capitol as rioters tried to interrupt the Electoral College tally and overturn Biden's election. The Senate will need to confirm Biden's Cabinet nominees as launches the new administration.

To "restore the soul" of the country, Biden said in his inaugural speech, requires "unity."

"We can do great things, important things," Biden said from the Capitol's west front. "We can make America once again a leading force of good in the world." Yet as Washington looks to turn the page from Trump to the Biden administration, Republican leader Mitch

McConnell is not relinquishing power without a fight. McConnell is refusing to enter a power-sharing agreement with Senate Democrats unless they meet his demands, chiefly to preserve the Senate filibuster — the procedural tool often used by the minority party to block bills under rules that require 60 votes to advance legislation.

It's an arcane fight McConnell has inserted into what has traditionally been a more routine organizing resolution, but a power play by the outgoing Republican leader grabbing at tools that can be used to block Biden's agenda. Progressive and liberal Democrats are eager to do away with the filibuster

to more quickly advance Biden's priorities, but not all rank-and-file Senate Democrats are on board and new Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has not agreed to any changes.

Instead, Schumer has proposed an organizing resolution modeled after a 2001 agreement reached between the two leaders the last time the chamber was evenly divided. It allowed equal representation on committees, shared resources for offices and other needs and made no mention of filibuster changes at all.

Talks have hit a stalemate, leaving Senate action uncertain.

Biden has said he wants Congress to press ahead on all fronts, confirming his nominees and considering his legislative priorities, but also holding the former president responsible during the impeachment trial. That's a tall order for a Senate under normal circumstances, but even more so now in the post-Trump era, with Republicans badly split between their loyalties to the defeated president and wealthy donors who are distancing themselves from Republicans who back Trump. Speaker Nancy Pelosi is expected to soon transmit to the Senate the House-passed article of impeachment against Trump, charged with incitement of insurrection, a step that will launch the Senate impeachment trial. □

## Proud Boy organizer arrested in Florida for riot at Capitol

**ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)** — Two Florida men, including a self-described organizer for the Proud Boys, a far-right extremist group, were arrested Wednesday for taking part in the siege of the U.S. Capitol earlier this month, authorities said.

Joseph Biggs, 37, was arrested in central Florida and faces charges of obstructing an official proceeding before Congress, entering a restricted on the groups of the U.S. Capitol and disorderly conduct.

According to an arrest affidavit, Biggs was part of a

crowd on Jan. 6 that overwhelmed Capitol Police officers who were manning a metal barrier on the steps of the Capitol. The mob entered the building as lawmakers were certifying President Joe Biden's election win. Biggs appeared to be wearing a walkie-talkie during the storming of the Capitol, but he told FBI agents that he had no knowledge about the planning of the destructive riot and didn't know who organized it, the affidavit said.

Ahead of the riot, Biggs told followers of his on the social

media app Parler to dress in black to resemble the far-left antifa movement, the affidavit said.

Biggs had organized a 2019 rally in Portland, Oregon, in which more than 1,000 far-right protesters and anti-fascist counter-demonstrators faced off. The Proud Boys are a neofascist group known for engaging in violent clashes at political rallies. During a September presidential debate, Trump had urged them to "stand back and stand by" when asked to condemn them by a moderator. □



Members of the Proud Boys, including organizer Joe Biggs, third from right, march across the Hawthorne Bridge during an "End Domestic Terrorism" rally in Portland, Ore., on Saturday, Aug. 17, 2019.

Associated Press

# Fierce California winds fan fires, topple trees and trucks

**SANTA CRUZ, Calif. (AP)** — Months-old embers from a deadly California fire were blown back to life Tuesday by powerful winds that raked the state and prompted safety blackouts to tens of thousands of people.

Firefighters chased wind-driven blazes up and down the state, trees and trucks were toppled, Yosemite National Park was forced to close and two coronavirus vaccination centers were shut down.

South of San Francisco, the state's firefighting agency said it responded to 13 vegetation fires in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties in 12 hours, and isolated evacuations were ordered for a total of 120 homes near two of them.

The fires were small, with the largest no more than a few dozen acres, and by nightfall were "creeping" rather than racing, according to state fire website descriptions. Two were within the area burned by last year's CZU Lightning Complex inferno. "Fires within the CZU Lightning Complex burn area were regenerated by high winds," the local unit of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection tweeted.

The complex started Aug. 16, 2020, during a barrage of lightning strikes. Separate fires merged, torching 1,500 buildings across 135 square miles (350 square kilometers) in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties. One person died.

The Santa Cruz Mountains



In this Aug. 20, 2020, file photo The CZU August Lightning Complex fire consumes trees and a fence along Empire Grade Road in the Santa Cruz Mountains community of Bonny Doon near Santa Cruz, Calif.

have a thick layer of "duff," dead vegetation under heavy timber in which deep smoldering embers can be revived by the wind, said Cecile Juliette, a Cal Fire spokeswoman. Cal Fire received nonstop reports of toppled trees and branches during the windstorm, Juliette said. Small fires blazed throughout the state, though most were quickly stopped from spreading and posed no serious threat to homes. The largest, near Bakersfield in the San Joaquin Valley, burned about 1 square mile (2.77 square kilometers) but was mostly surrounded. In both the north and south, residents were blacked out by utilities to prevent downed or damaged

power lines from sparking blazes. Southern California Edison shut off power to more than 78,000 homes and businesses in seven counties and was considering blacking out well over a quarter-million more. Pacific Gas & Electric cut power to more than 5,000 customers. That was in addition to nearly 300,000 customers in the northern and central parts of the state that had lost power because of the weather. About 70,000 remained without power by Tuesday evening. Most of California is experiencing drought conditions and the remainder is considered abnormally dry. Winter snowfall and rain have largely been woeful.

Gusts began Monday night and raged into Tuesday. They howled at speeds up to 95 mph (152.8 kph) in the Mayacamas Mountains to the north of San Francisco Bay, and winds raised clouds of ash and dust from wildfire burn scars across Monterey County, the regional National Weather Service office said. High wind warnings were posted in the Sierra Nevada and adjacent foothills. "People should avoid being outside in forested areas and around trees and branches," the Hanford weather office wrote. "If possible, remain in the lower levels of your home during the windstorm, and avoid windows. Use caution if you must drive."

**Associated Press**

Yosemite National Park closed for the day, citing the winds and downed trees that smashed trucks and at least one building. The park said it could remain closed until Friday morning. In rural Bass Lake, south of the park, a 100-foot (30-meter) pine tree smashed through Don Mandy's house as he was posting a Facebook message about the roaring winds keeping him awake. "It sounded like an earthquake," he told KFSN-TV. Then a second tree toppled and a branch poked another hole through his roof. He and his wife fled for cover in another area of the house and weren't harmed.

In Southern California, the region's notorious Santa Ana winds were ramping up, making travel hazardous for big rigs. Some were blown over. One gust hit 86 mph (138.4 kph) in northern Los Angeles County, the National Weather Service said. The winds began easing Tuesday afternoon in the Bay Area and northward, which would see "dry and tranquil midweek weather," according to a National Weather Service forecast. But strong northeast winds were expected to continue in Southern California through Wednesday. The wind forced closure of a mass COVID-19 vaccination site at Hansen Dam in the San Fernando Valley. Another site at a Disneyland parking lot was closed in advance of the gusts. □

# Ex-Arizona official to head to prison for illegal adoptions

By **JACQUES BILLEAUD**

**Associated Press**

**PHOENIX (AP)** — A former Arizona politician must report to prison Thursday to begin serving the first of three sentences for running an illegal adoption scheme that paid pregnant women from the Marshall Islands to come to the U.S. to give up their babies.

Paul Petersen, a Republican who served as Maricopa County assessor for six years and also worked as

an adoption attorney, was sentenced to six years after pleading guilty in federal court in Arkansas to conspiring to commit human smuggling. Petersen, who has acknowledged running the adoption scheme, is awaiting sentencing in state courts in Arizona for fraud convictions and in Utah for human smuggling and other convictions. Sentencing dates have not yet been set for those cases. Prosecutors have said Pe-

tersen illegally paid women from the Pacific island nation to give up their babies in at least 70 adoption cases in Arizona, Utah and Arkansas. Marshall Islands citizens have been prohibited from traveling to the U.S. for adoption purposes since 2003. Petersen's attorney, Kurt Altman, did not immediately respond to phone and email messages seeking comment. Petersen will serve his sentence in the Arkansas case

at a federal prison near El Paso, Texas. The judge gave him two years longer in prison than sentencing guidelines recommended, describing Petersen's adoption practice as a "criminal livelihood" and saying Petersen knowingly made false statements to immigration officials and state courts in carrying out the scheme. Petersen has appealed the punishment. In Arizona, he pleaded guilty to fraud charges for sub-

mitting false applications to the state's Medicaid system so the birth mothers could receive state-funded health coverage — even though he knew they didn't live in Arizona — and for providing documents to a juvenile court that contained false information. Petersen has said he has since paid back to the state \$670,000 of more than \$800,000 in health care costs that prosecutors cited in his indictment. □

## U.N. announces talks on new Syria constitution resume Jan 25

By EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

**UNITED NATIONS (AP)** — The U.N. special envoy for Syria announced Wednesday that the next round of talks toward revising the war-battered country's constitution will start in Geneva on Jan. 25 and urged the parties to move to actual drafting.

Geir Pedersen told the U.N. Security Council he views the meeting of delegations from Syria's government, opposition and civil society as very important. He said many subjects have been discussed for more than a year and it's now time for the Constitutional Committee to ensure that "the meetings are better organized and more focused."

"I believe that we need to ensure that the committee begins to move from 'preparing' a constitutional reform to 'drafting' one, as it is mandated to do," he said.

Pedersen said the committee can start considering specific constitutional issues and draft provisions and agree on future meetings on specific topics. "And there needs to be more urgency in the process," he



In this April 30, 2019 file photo, U.N. Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen speaks to journalists following a U.N. Security Council meeting on Syria at U.N. headquarters.

said.

"I believe that these are reasonable goals, but I cannot assure the council that they will be met this time," he said, appealing to the committee to be ready to move to a new phase of work in this next session Jan. 25-29.

The United States and several Western allies have accused Syria's President Bashar Assad of deliberately delaying the drafting of a

new constitution to waste time until presidential elections this year and avoid U.N.-supervised voting as called for by the U.N. Security Council.

According to Syria's elections law, presidential elections are scheduled to take place between April 16 and May 16, at least 90 days before Assad's seven-year term expires.

A council resolution adopted in December 2015

unanimously endorsed a road map to peace in Syria that was approved in Geneva on June 30, 2012 by representatives of the United Nations, Arab League, European Union, Turkey and all five permanent Security Council members — the U.S., Russia, China, France and Britain.

It calls for a Syrian-led political process starting with the establishment of a transitional governing body, fol-

lowed by the drafting of a new constitution and ending with U.N.-supervised elections. The resolution says the free and fair elections should meet "the highest international standards" of transparency and accountability, with all Syrians — including members of the diaspora — eligible to participate.

At a Russian-hosted Syrian peace conference in January 2018, an agreement was reached to form a 150-member committee to draft a new constitution, which took until September 2019. A 45-member committee known as the "Small Body" will be holding its fifth meeting starting next week. Pedersen, who has been overseeing the talks, told the Security Council that under the U.N. resolution it is clear that the political process "must be Syrian-owned and led, but the conflict is highly internationalized, with five foreign armies active in Syria."

Pedersen urged "a more serious and cooperative international diplomacy" saying despite their differences key countries are committed to the U.N. resolution. □ After a decade of con-

Associated Press

## Gas explosion rips through Madrid building, killing 3

By ARITZ PARRA and MANU FERNÁNDEZ

Associated Press

**MADRID (AP)** — A powerful gas explosion tore through a residential building in central Madrid on Wednesday, killing at least three people and ripping the facade off the structure.

A tower of smoke rose from the building, where repairs were being done to a gas boiler, and billowed through Toledo Street, near the city's center. Aerial footage shared by Spain's National Police showed rubble covering a nearby schoolyard — though Madrid's mayor said no one was seriously injured at the school.

At least eight people were injured in the blast, one seriously, the Madrid emergency service said in a tweet. And a technician who was working on the boiler

is missing, according to the Spanish government's representative for the Madrid region, José Manuel Franco, who confirmed the three dead.

A police spokesman on the ground told reporters that firefighters were trying to put out a small fire inside the damaged building before they could bring in search dogs and special rescue teams to look for any possible survivors.

An Associated Press reporter saw emergency workers carry two bodies away from the area, one that firefighters covered with a blue blanket and another shrouded in reflective emergency sheeting.

The building belongs to the nearby La Paloma Catholic Parish and hosted the offices and apartments for some of its priests, Madrid Archbishop Carlos Osoro

told Spanish public broadcaster, TVE, who confirmed that none of the clerics were among the victims.

Emy Lee Grau, an area resident who was watching television in a building across the street, said that the moment of the blast was "terrifying."

"Everything shook, it felt like the roof was falling on us. We were terrified when we saw the amount of smoke coming out of the church's building," the 20-year-old Madrid resident told The Associated Press.

A nearby nursing home was evacuated and no injuries were initially reported among the residents, Madrid Mayor José Luis Martínez Almeida told reporters on the ground. The home's 55 residents were initially taken to a hotel across the street and were later sent to other care homes, offi-



A firefighter works at the scene of an explosion in downtown Madrid, Spain, Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2021.

Associated Press

cials said.

Martínez Almeida also said that some mild damage had been identified in a nearby school, where he said people suffered no more than "scratches." Neighborhood resident Leire Reparaz said she heard the explosion and

wasn't immediately sure where it was coming from.

"We all thought it was from the school.

We went up the stairs to the top of our building and we could see the structure of the building and lots of gray smoke," the 24-year-old said. □

# China labels Pompeo 'doomsday clown' over genocide claims

**BEIJING (AP)** — China's Foreign Ministry described outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday as a "doomsday clown" and said his designation of China as a perpetrator of genocide and crimes against humanity was merely "a piece of wastepaper."

The allegations of abuses against Muslim minority groups in China's Xinjiang region are "outright sensational pseudo-propositions and a malicious farce concocted by individual anti-China and anti-Communist forces represented by Pompeo," spokesperson Hua Chunying told reporters at a daily briefing.

"In our view, Pompeo's so-called designation is a piece of wastepaper. This American politician, who is notorious for lying and deceiving, is turning himself into a doomsday clown and joke of the century with his last madness and lies of the century," Hua said.

Pompeo's announcement Tuesday doesn't require any immediate actions, although the U.S. must take the designation into account in formulating policy toward China. China says its policies in Xinjiang aim only to promote economic growth and social stability. The U.S. has previously spo-



In this file photo taken Thursday, Oct. 1, 2020, a protester from the Uighur community living in Turkey, holds an anti-China placard during a protest in Istanbul, against what they allege is oppression by the Chinese government to Muslim Uighurs in far-western Xinjiang province.

Associated Press

ken out and taken action on Xinjiang, implementing a range of sanctions against senior Chinese Communist Party leaders and state-run enterprises that fund repressive policies in the vast, resource-rich region.

Last week, the Trump administration announced it would halt imports of cotton and tomatoes from Xinjiang, with Customs and Border Protection officials saying they would block products from there suspected of being produced

with forced labor.

Many of the Chinese officials accused of having taken part in repression are already under U.S. sanctions. The "genocide" designation means new measures will be easier to impose.

Tuesday's move is the latest in a series of steps the outgoing Trump administration has taken to ramp up pressure on China over issues from human rights and the coronavirus pandemic to Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong and the South China

Sea. China has responded with its own sanctions and tough rhetoric.

China has imprisoned more than 1 million people, including Uighurs and other mostly Muslim ethnic groups, in a vast network of prison-like political indoctrination camps, according to U.S. officials and human rights groups. People have been subjected to torture, sterilization and political indoctrination in addition to forced labor as part of an assimilation campaign in a region whose inhabitants

are ethnically and culturally distinct from the Han Chinese majority.

The Associated Press reported on widespread forced birth control among the Uighurs last year, including the mass sterilization of Muslim women, even while family planning restrictions are loosened on members of China's dominant Han ethnic group.

China has denied all the charges, but Uighur forced labor has been linked by reporting by the AP to various products imported to the U.S., including clothing and electronic goods such as cameras and computer monitors.

James Leibold, a specialist in Chinese ethnic policy at La Trobe in Melbourne, Australia, said international pressure appears to have had some effect on Chinese policies in Xinjiang, particularly in prompting the government to release information about the camps and possibly reducing mass detentions.

"So hopefully we'll see a continued continuity with regards to the new (Joe Biden) administration on holding China to account," Leibold said in an interview. "And hopefully the Biden administration can bring its allies along to continue to put pressure on the Chinese government," he said. □

# American who enthused Bali was queer-friendly being deported



American graphic designer Kristen Antoinette Gray, left, walks with her partner Sandra Michelle Alexander, right, to be tested for the coronavirus at a hospital in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia on Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2021.

Associated Press

By **FIRDIA LISNAWATI**  
Associated Press  
DENPASAR, Indonesia (AP)

— An American graphic designer is being deported from the Indonesian resort

island of Bali over her viral tweets that celebrated it as a low-cost, queer-friendly place for foreigners to live. Kristen Antoinette Gray arrived in Bali in January 2020 and wound up staying through the coronavirus pandemic. Her posts on Twitter, including comparisons between Bali and Los Angeles and links to buy her e-book, began going viral in Indonesia on Sunday.

Gray's posts were considered to have "disseminated information disturbing to the public," which was the basis for her deportation, said Jamaruli Manihuruk, chief of the Bali regional office for the Ministry of Law

and Human Rights.

A statement from the office cited her descriptions of Bali providing comfort for LGBT and being easily accessible during the pandemic. It also referenced tweets with links to her e-book, which had direct links to agents who could help foreigners move to the island.

"She stated that she could provide easy access to Bali through the recommended agency and offered the low living costs in Bali, that it is comfortable and LGBTQ-friendly," Manihuruk said at a news conference Tuesday.

Her tweets also referenced her e-book costing \$30 and

a follow-up consultation about becoming an expatriate in Bali for \$50. "She is suspected of carrying out business activities by selling e-books and put a rate for consulting (about) Bali tourism," Manihuruk said.

Many Indonesian social media users were furious that she was showing off living and working in Bali without a proper business visa.

"I am not guilty. I have not overstayed my (tourist) visa. I am not making money in Indonesian rupiah. I put out a statement about LGBT and I am deported because of LGBT," Gray told reporters after Immigration officials announced the deportation. □

## Boats emerge from Sahara sand to transport migrants to Spain

By MOSA'AB ELSHAMY

Associated Press

DAKHLA, Western Sahara  
(AP) —

Beneath a star-packed sky in the Sahara, smugglers and handymen unearth a boat buried in the sand, a made-to-order vessel for carrying migrants from the North African coast to Spain's Canary Islands.

With seasoned skill, the men hoist the blue-bottomed wooden boat atop a four-wheel drive vehicle that will take it from this inland hideaway to the Western Sahara shore. From there, the boat is meant to take 20 to 30 migrants into the Atlantic Ocean and across what the European Union's border agency calls "the most dangerous migratory route in the world."

The boat handover is a crucial but little-seen piece of the migrant smuggling chain in disputed Western Sahara — a business that thrived last year, as the coronavirus pandemic plunged many Africans into poverty and, with other routes choked off, migration to the Canary Islands jumped eight-fold to the highest rates ever recorded.

Encouraged by aid from Spain and the EU, the Moroccan authorities who control Western Sahara — where some residents have long sought independence — are increasingly cracking down and thwarted a recent boat transfer witnessed by The Associated Press.

But many others succeed, as smugglers dodge police helicopter searchlights in the desert and reach fishing towns on the coast around Dakhla. The peninsula city boasts a thriving fishing port, and kitesurfing enthusiasts flock to its waters. But in recent months, its beaches have become a hot spot for smuggling networks eyeing the Canaries, 500 kilometers (300 miles) north.

Although irregular crossings to Europe dropped overall in 2020, the Canary Islands route saw a significant rise, with some 22,600 migrants arriving, making Spain the



A tent where smugglers stay while building fishing boats to be used to carry migrants to the Canary Islands, is set up in a remote part of the desert out of the town of Dakhla in Morocco-administered Western Sahara, Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2020.

main point of entry for migrants trying to reach European shores last year, according to EU and Spanish government figures. At least 600 people died or disappeared trying to make the journey.

The resurgence of the route has been driven in part by COVID-19.

The pandemic has wiped out livelihoods across Morocco by cutting off tourism revenue and periodically shutting down local businesses. While in the past most arrivals in the Canaries were from sub-Saharan Africa, now about half are Moroccans. Boats also routinely set out from the West African shores of Guinea, Gambia and Mauritania, according to the International Organization for Migration.

A resident of Dakhla who organizes trips for migrants said economic difficulties drove him to work for a smuggling network.

"We had to make money and feed our families," the 32-year-old told the AP on condition of anonymity because what he does is illegal.

He says he puts together one trip per week, while competitors send out up to 10 boats a night. He estimates as many as half of the migration attempts fail, either because of problems

before departure or at sea. One recent failure was visible on the shores of the Dakhla peninsula: the freshly charred remains of a migrant boat that caught fire. The fate of those aboard is unclear.

IOM's Missing Migrants Project provisionally recorded 601 deaths or disappearances on the Canary route last year, including at least 109 who left from Dakhla or were found near Dakhla. They are still investigating another eight missing boats with 355 people aboard.

The Dakhla resident said migrants pay \$2,000 for the trip — a vast sum in Morocco, where the typical worker earns a few hundred dollars a month — but wouldn't say how much he earns himself.

"I don't know where they get the money from, but they want to leave at any cost," he said.

One recent night, a group of smugglers left Dakhla and headed inland, followed by a vehicle carrying a dozen handymen. They drove past police checkpoints then turned off the highway into the endless expanse of desert. The driver had a GPS coordinate on a phone and crossed the sand with the experience of someone who seemed to have taken the route many times.

boat. Within minutes, the vessel was deep beneath the sand again — and the tent and equipment gone. As the men drove back toward town, police stopped their car and searched it for signs of smuggling — but found none.

The carpenter said he built the boat in the desert to avoid attracting attention — a common practice, though smugglers also sometimes simply buy boats from fishermen. The carpenter, who said he earns about 20,000 dirham (\$2,000) per vessel, spoke on condition of anonymity because of the connection to smuggling networks.

When such boats make it to Dakhla, they find plenty of takers.

It can take up to four days to get to the Canaries, and people arrive in terrible shape. They generally don't take food on the journey and very little water, if any, according to migration agencies.

But deterring people from taking the risk is a huge challenge in a global economic crisis. □

Associated Press

At the meeting point, the men found a white tent and a young boat-builder — and unearthed a large boat.

Just as they prepared to head back, the smugglers received a message about police "movement" and were told to leave the



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# LOCAL



**EAGLE BEACH** — Ike's bistro at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa surprises with an excellent, tasteful and varied vegan menu. Executive Chef Sandro Herold is obviously enthusiastic about the new offerings that fill up the place already. "People nowadays are a bit more conscious about what they eat. This menu offers a wide variety with creative vegan food items." We asked some of the guests about their experience: "delicious", "very tasty" "great food, great setting". Even teens, in general not too fond of health food, applauded the offerings. "We did not even miss the meat". Of course the restaurant also offers their extensive regular menu for the non-vegan guests containing all you wish From the Land or From the Sea.

Vegan is hot now, says the chef, and we had that confirmed by several guests. Ike's Bistro is an open air restaurant, located in the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa. Under a huge cabana with a view to the romantically lit pool of the resort you are seated in relaxed chairs and served by great waiters. And not unimportant: Covid-19 safe.

Your senses are tickled because of the purity and freshness of the food items. You may choose for the unknown which is a three-course vegan chef tasting menu that can also be combined with a wine pairing. Or you select your choices from the menu. All dishes are 100% Vegan and are gluten-free unless labeled otherwise. Start with appetizers like



## Ike's Bistro unveils vegan smorgasbord



Vegan Fish Taco, Chickpeas Tartare and Avocado, Spicy Buffalo Cauliflower Wings or Vegetable Tempura. Tomato Basil Soup or Lemongrass Carrot Ginger Soup are simply delicious as are the Arugula Jackfruit Salad or Mesclun Salad. For the main course pick your pick: Sesame Ginger Duck (contains gluten), Stuffed Corn Chips and Avocado, Grilled Fish Filet and Roasted Cauliflower or Truffle Porcini Risotto & Grilled Tofu. This heavenly healthy trip reaches its end destination with a scrumptious dessert: Caribbean Snickers, a must-try! All of those choices embrace your inner senses with their freshness and clear flavors.

Vegan might be on the menu in many restaurants nowadays as 'the other option', but here at Ike's Bistro they celebrate vegan and you get hooked, that is a promise. Passion, creativity, purity, dedication to a concept and a beautiful setting take care of an enchanting experience. Vegans and non-vegans are welcome, Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa has got it all covered. □



Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa – Ike's Bistro  
J.E. Irausquin Boulevard 55  
Telephone +297 582 3444  
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## Aruba's underwater wonderland



**ORANJESTAD** - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

### Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the

north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

### Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded

the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its port-side in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

### Baby beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your

car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

### Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the

southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □





**EAGLE BEACH — The Kitchen Table is an elegant, classy, intimate, high-quality restaurant with an exceptional dining set-up. Dining here is an experience, a kind of sitting- at your- best- friend's or family's kitchen table where you feel and taste that the food contains love. Are you looking for something different, an ecstatic foody trip, than this is where you need to go.**

The 7-8 course gastronomic journey will start with sparkling wine at the patio of The Kitchen Table's new location at Paradise Beach Villas as of 6.45PM. Around 7.00PM guests will be guided for a memorable dinner on the second floor of the other popular restaurant Asi Es Mi Peru. The dining concept reflects extraordinary, elegant and exquisite dishes from the Caribbean, Peruvian fusion and international cuisine created by the owners, Chef David Lizano and his team. To pair the perfect wines three sommeliers were invited to make the selection.

The interior of the restaurant is if you were in an elegant establishment in Lima, the capital city of Peru. You feel elevated in the top of the building where dinner takes place in an intimate setting. The typical, colorful Peruvian fabrics dress the ceiling while the large windows dignify the room. There are only 16 seats available creating an intimacy underlined by the owner's personal attention. "This is an amazing experience," says Robert J. Giordanella from New York. "The food is truly divine," shares a local guest. An evening at The Kitchen Table will be noted as unforgettable in your book of vacation memories, as it stands out from the regular island dinners.

**It is all about consistency**

The Peruvian-born Roxanna Salinas and her husband Jan van Nes are the secret formula behind The Kitchen Table's success. The couple takes a personal approach to what they do, this is not about running a business as usual. This is more about making you feel welcomed home, as well as being pampered. They bring top hospitality, experience and authenticity to the table. Within this gourmet dinner concept the two blended the Peruvian culinary art of Roxanna's top kitchen team and Jan's expertise from The Kitchen Table. The result is one big trip of delight, indulge and tickling of your taste buds. The Kitchen Table welcomes you with open arms every Tuesday to Saturday.

**Peruvian touch**

In the last ten years, Peru has been recognized as one of the world's best culinary destinations, and for seven consecutive years, the South American country has won the award for the Best Culinary destination at the Worlds Travel Awards. Biodiversity combined multiculturalism are the reasons why Peru is so rich in gastronomy. You can travel through the last 500 years, touch a mix of cultures whenever you taste authentic Peruvian cuisine. The Kitchen Table brings this epicurean delicacies to Aruba paired perfectly with the best wines and they will make you understand why Peru is at the height

**The Kitchen Table enters sixth year of gastronomic success on NEW location:**

**A very fine culinary journey of Caribbean and Peruvian fusion cuisine**



of today's gastronomy.

The Kitchen Table is open from Tuesday to Saturday. Have a peak on their website [www.thekitchentableinaruba.com](http://www.thekitchentableinaruba.com) or call them at +297-280 7117. □



# Deal offers more banking services for California pot firms

By **MICHAEL R. BLOOD**  
Associated Press

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — A California cannabis industry group announced Tuesday that it reached an agreement with a state credit union that will provide checking, wire transfers and other banking services for more marijuana companies, helping ease what has been an obstacle for many businesses.

Most Americans live in states where cannabis is legally available in some form, and broad legal marijuana sales began in California in 2018. But there's been a problem when it comes to banks: Many don't want anything to do with money from the cannabis industry for fear it could expose them to legal trouble from the federal government, which still considers marijuana illegal. As a result, many marijuana companies in California's multibillion-dollar market have been left to do business largely in cash, making them appealing targets for crime.

Under the partnership, the California Cannabis Industry Association said its



**In this June 27, 2017, file photo, bundles of \$20 bills are placed on a table as Jerred Kiloh, owner of the Higher Path medical marijuana dispensary, prepares a trip to Los Angeles City Hall to pay his monthly tax payment in cash in Los Angeles.**

Associated Press

members will gain access to banking services through the California-based North Bay Credit Union.

"Since California legalized cannabis, operators have faced significant struggles with banking and payment services, given the federal government's continued ban on cannabis products," the group said in a statement. The agreement is intended "to alleviate the banking obstacles that cannabis operators face, so they can focus on their core business."

Industry experts say the

number of state financial institutions willing to handle cannabis-linked funds is gradually growing, and a state law enacted last year was designed to provide legal safeguards for banks and credit unions engaging with marijuana companies.

The credit union said on its website that it has been offering banking services to the cannabis industry since 2017. Medicinal cannabis sales have been legal in California for over two decades.

Jerred Kiloh, who heads the

Los Angeles-based United Cannabis Business Association, said the agreement represents another encouraging step as more financial institutions open their doors to the industry.

With growing acceptance of cannabis nationwide, along with regulatory changes, "there are more banks that are willing to tell people they are willing to accept cannabis accounts," he said.

As of Sept. 30, federal regulators reported that 677 banks and credit unions were providing services for marijuana business. That represents a small fraction of the overall banking industry, and the figure had declined slightly in 2020, a drop attributed in part to business closings caused by coronavirus restrictions. Efforts to broaden banking access for pot companies have stalled in Congress.

The House in September passed a bill to allow businesses legitimately operating under state laws to access loans, lines of credit and other banking services, while sheltering financial institutions from prosecution for handling marijuana-

linked money, but it didn't clear the Senate.

The industry is hoping for regulatory gains in Washington with the arrival of the new administration and Democratic control of the Senate.

President-elect Joe Biden was once known as an anti-drug warrior but has softened his tone over time. He has said he would decriminalize — but not legalize — the use of marijuana, while expunging all prior cannabis use convictions and ending jail time for drug use alone. However, legalization advocates recall with bitterness that he was a leading Senate supporter of a 1994 crime bill that sent droves of minor drug offenders to prison.

Even if there are doubts within the industry about Biden, the Democratic Party is clearly more welcoming to cannabis reform, especially its progressive wing. Both the House and Senate will be under Democratic control this year, and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris has said making pot legal at the federal level is the "smart thing to do." □

# Netflix's big 4Q lifts video service above 200M subscribers

By **MICHAEL LIEDTKE**  
AP Technology Writer

**SAN RAMON, Calif. (AP)**

— Netflix's video streaming service has surpassed 200 million subscribers for the first time as its expanding line-up of TV series and movies continues to captivate people stuck at home during the ongoing battle against the pandemic.

The subscriber milestone highlighted Netflix's fourth-quarter results released Tuesday. The service added another 8.5 million subscribers during the October-December period, capping Netflix's biggest year since its inception as a DVD-by-mail service in 1997. Netflix ended the year with nearly 204 million worldwide subscribers.

The fourth-quarter gains easily topped the projections of the roughly 6 million additional subscribers

projected by Netflix's own management and Wall Street analysts, even as the company began rolling out price increases of 8% to 13% in the U.S. Netflix's stock surged by more than 12% extended trading after the latest subscriber numbers came out.

After upending the DVD-rental industry, Netflix introduced the then-revolutionary concept of streaming TV shows and films 14 years ago. At that time, its service had a mere 6 million subscribers.

The streaming service began to grow rapidly seven years ago when Netflix started producing its own shows and accelerated a worldwide expansion that now spans more than 190 countries. Since the February 2013 debut of its first original series, "House of Cards," Netflix has attract-

ed more than 170 million additional subscribers.

Netflix gained another 37 million subscribers last year, a 22% increase from 2019. Its stock fared even better, rising by 67% last year. The Los Gatos, California, company now boasts a market value of more than \$220 billion.

For all its success, Netflix still faces challenges in the coming years from bevy of deep-pocketed rivals, with perhaps the most formidable posed by a more experienced and even larger entertainment company: Walt Disney Co.

After deciding to stop licensing its library to Netflix, Disney introduced its own video streaming service 14 months ago. The service, Disney Plus, has proved far more popular than anyone imagined, accumulating nearly 90 million subscribers



**This Aug. 13, 2020, file photo shows a logo for Netflix on a remote control in Portland, Ore.**

Associated Press

in its first year, emboldening the company's management to predict that it will boast as many as 260 million subscribers at some point in 2024.

"It is super impressive what Disney has done," Netflix co-CEO Reed Hastings said in Tuesday video discussion with investors. "It gets us fired up about increasing our membership and increasing our content pro-

duction."

To retain and attract subscribers, Netflix already had been spending so much money on original programming that the company usually ends up shoveling out more cash than its video services brings in from its subscribers, although it has remained profitable under the accounting standards allowed in the entertainment industry. □

# Cybersecurity firm: Booting hackers a complex chore

By **FRANK BAJAK**  
AP Technology Writer

**BOSTON (AP)** — Efforts to assess the impact of a more than seven-month-old cyberespionage campaign blamed on Russia — and boot the intruders — remain in their early stages, says the cybersecurity firm that discovered the attack. The hack has badly shaken the U.S. government and private sector.

The firm, FireEye, released a tool and a white paper Tuesday to help potential victims scour their cloud-based installations of Microsoft 365 — where users' emails, documents and collaborative tools reside — to determine if hackers broke in and remain active. The aim is not just to ferret out and evict the hackers but to keep them from being able to re-enter, said Matthew McWhirt, the effort's team leader.

"There's a lot of specific things you have to do — we learned from our investigations — to really eradicate the attacker," he said. Since FireEye disclosed its discovery in mid-December, infections have been found at federal agencies



This Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2015 file photo shows FireEye offices in Milpitas, Calif.

including the departments of Commerce, Treasury, Justice and federal courts. Also compromised, said FireEye chief technical officer Charles Carmakal, are dozens of private sector targets with a high concentration in the software industry and Washington D.C. policy-oriented think tanks.

On Tuesday, the security software company Mal-

warebytes announced that it was among the victims — and said it was compromised through the very Microsoft email system the FireEye tool aims to button down.

The intruders have stealthily scooped up intelligence for months, carefully choosing targets from the roughly 18,000 customers infected with malicious code they activated after sneaking it

into an update of network management software first pushed out last March by Texas-based SolarWinds.

"We continue to learn about new victims almost every day. I still think that we're still in the early days of really understanding the scope of the threat-actor activity," said Carmakal. The public has not heard much about who exactly was compromised be-

cause many victims still can't figure out what the attackers have done and thus "may not feel they have an obligation to report on it," said Carmakal.

"This threat actor is so good, so sophisticated, so disciplined, so patient and so elusive that it's just hard for organizations to really understand what the scope and impact of the intrusions are.

But I can assure you there are a lot of victims beyond what has been made public to date," Carmakal said. On top of that, he said, the hackers "will continue to obtain access to organizations. There will be new victims."

Microsoft disclosed on Dec. 31 that the hackers had viewed some of its source code. It said it found "no indications our systems were used to attack others." On Tuesday, Malwarebytes said it had determined that "the attacker only gained access to a limited subset of internal company emails" and said the conduit — Microsoft's Azure cloud services — are not used in its software production environments. □

Associated Press

## Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

2								5
6				5				4
		1			6	2		
		9	3		5			
	4						6	
			8		2	7		
		4	7			8		
7				8				2
3								6

Difficulty Level ★★★

1/21

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## GM teams up with Microsoft on driverless cars

By **MATT OTT**  
AP Business Writer

**SILVER SPRING, Md. (AP)** — General Motors is teaming up with Microsoft to accelerate its rollout of electric, self-driving cars. In the partnership announced Tuesday, the companies said Microsoft's Azure cloud and edge computing platform would be used to "commercialize its unique autonomous vehicle solutions at scale."

Microsoft joins General Motors, Honda and other institutional investors in a combined new equity investment of more than \$2 billion in Cruise, bringing its valuation to about \$30 billion. Cruise, which GM bought in 2016, has been a leader in driverless technology and got the go-ahead from California

late last year to test its automated vehicles in San Francisco without backup drivers. Auto companies have been joining forces and bringing technology firms on board to try to spread out the enormous costs — and by nature, risks — of developing self-driving and electric vehicles. Honda is in on the Cruise project with GM, Volkswagen and Ford have teamed up with Pittsburgh autonomous vehicle company Argo AI, and Hyundai joined with Fiat Chrysler last summer in a deal to use Waymo's driverless car technology. Toyota and Uber are also working together, while Amazon skipped over the automaker part of the equation and last summer bought self-driving tech-

nology company Zoox, which is developing an autonomous vehicle for a ride-hailing service. Mass adoption of driverless vehicles — and profits — are still a ways off, said industry analyst Sam Abuelsamid of Guidehouse Insights. "The reality is that the automated driving landscape is taking much longer to mature than had been anticipated a few years ago," Abuelsamid said. "It's probably going to be mid-decade before we start to see significant volumes of these vehicles." Abuelsamid added that the importance of adding a company like Microsoft to the mix is its cloud computing power and the ability to analyze data from the vehicles to improve the technology. □

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# Review: A showdown at the border in 'No Man's Land'

By **LINDSEY BAHR**  
AP Film Writer

Border tensions are boiled down to two families in "No Man's Land," an uneven independent thriller with some redeeming qualities. Its heart, and homages to classic Westerns, are in the right place even if the work as a whole is neither as impactful nor epic as the filmmakers were striving for.

The film sets up two families on either side of the border. The Greers are American ranchers whose property exists in no man's land, north of the Rio Grande but south of the fences. The Mexican family — they don't get a last name — are just hoping to start a new life in America. But they have misfortune to cross through the Greers' on a night that they've decided to patrol their lands. They've been frustrated that their cattle keep getting out when their fences are cut.

And about 30 minutes in, things come to a head in a tense showdown in the middle of the night. Bill Greer (Frank Grillo) and his son Lucas (Alex MacNicoll) have their guns drawn on the family, who are unarmed and panicked. The Greers speak no Spanish and don't seem all that interested in the fact that Gustavo (Jorge A. Jimenez) speaks perfect



This image released by IFC Films shows, from second left, George Lopez, Frank Grillo, Andie McDowell and Jake Allyn in a scene from "No Man's Land."

English. The shouting continues and things go south quickly when the other son, Jackson (Jake Allyn), dashes into the situation to help and ends up shooting and killing Gustavo's young son Fernando (Alessio Valentini) in the chaos. Lucas also gets shot.

It's a fine set-up as Jackson is the son who is supposed to get out. He's been recruited to play minor league baseball in New York. His father is prepared to take the blame, but Ramirez (George Lopez), the Texas Ranger who stumbles on the scene who

also somehow does not speak Spanish, suspects the cover up. When he comes to arrest him, Jackson and his horse Sundance flee across the Rio Grande.

For a kid who has grown up on a small ranch, Jackson is shockingly inept at survival skills, drinking stagnant water, being a little too trusting of everyone he encounters and sleeping in random barns along the way. It's also somewhat hard to believe that he has not in his 20 some years picked up even one word of Spanish, but perhaps the filmmakers are just trying to belabor

the point of intolerance.

On his journey to nowhere, Jackson gets a lot of charity from strangers including a wealthy rancher with a stunning daughter (Esmeralda Pimentel) who let him stay and work for a while. And he starts to realize that his neighbors across the border are people too and not nuisances to shoo away with guns and hate. Oh and he's also being hunted by Gustavo and a local tough Luis (Andres Delgado).

"No Man's Land" was written by Allyn and directed by his brother Conor. The

Texas-born siblings wanted to make a film about hope, even as "the world is growing apart" and "xenophobia and prejudice are abundant," the director wrote in a statement. And indeed, "No Man's Land" is less about revenge than it is about empathy and atonement, but I'm not sure Jackson was the best point of focus. He is a nice-looking kid with a lot to learn, but also a little dim-witted and dull. He is neither hero nor anti-hero, he's just a victim of the increasingly improbable and sometimes downright silly plot.

As far as the performances go, the most compelling ones are from Lopez and Jimenez, who don't get nearly enough to do. The story would have benefited from a little more Gustavo and a little less Jackson.

Conor Allyn is clearly a talented director and has a lot of reverence for the Western genre, but for as good and lofty as it's intentions are, "No Man's Land" comes up short.

"No Man's Land," an IFC Films release in select theaters Jan. 22, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "some strong violence and language." Running time: 114 minutes. Two stars out of four. □

Associated Press

# Music stars slam UK's 'shameful' failure on EU touring rules



In this Sunday, Feb. 9, 2020 file photo, Elton John performs "(I'm Gonna) Love Me Again" nominated for the award for best original song from "Rocketman" at the Oscars, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

By **JILL LAWLESS**  
Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — Dozens of U.K. music stars including El-

ton John, Ed Sheeran and conductor Simon Rattle say musicians have been "shamefully failed" by the

British government, which has left them facing post-Brexit restrictions on touring in the European Union.

In a letter published Wednesday in the Times of London, more than 100 musicians including Sting, Pink Floyd's Roger Waters and Roger Daltrey of The Who, along with the heads of major arts institutions, said the new U.K.-EU trade deal that took effect Jan. 1 has "a gaping hole where the promised free movement for musicians should be."

Britain's departure from the EU means that U.K. citizens can no longer live and work freely in the 27-nation bloc. Tourists do not need

visas for stays of up to 90 days, and some short business trips are also allowed. But artists and musicians have not been included in the deal.

Britain and the EU disagree about who is to blame for the omission, each accusing the other of rejecting a deal for touring artists.

The new rules mean U.K. performers have to comply with differing rules in the 27 EU nations, negotiating visas for musicians and permits for their equipment. Many say the costs and red tape will make it impossible for British artists to perform on the continent, endangering the country's status

as a cultural powerhouse. The musicians' letter said the new expense and bureaucracy will make "many tours unviable, especially for young emerging musicians who are already struggling to keep their heads above water owing to the COVID ban on live music." □

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# Woods has 5th back surgery, to miss Torrey Pines and Riviera

By DOUG FERGUSON  
AP Golf Writer

Tiger Woods has suffered a setback with his back, disclosing Tuesday that he recently had a fifth surgery that will keep him from starting the year until after the West Coast Swing on the PGA Tour.

Woods will not play next week in the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines, which he has won seven times, most recently in 2013. He also won the U.S. Open in 2008 at Torrey Pines, which hosts the U.S. Open again in June.

He also will miss the Genesis Invitational on Feb. 18-21 at Riviera, where he serves as tournament host. In a statement from his TGR Foundation, which Woods also tweeted, he did not say when he had the microdiscectomy surgery though Rory McIlroy, speaking Wednesday at a news conference ahead of the Abu Dhabi Championship, said it took place on Dec. 23 and that Woods was "back on his feet the next day."

It was to remove a pressurized disc fragment that was giving him nerve pain during the PNC Championship last month that he played with 11-year-old son Charlie.

Doctors said the operation was a success and predicted a full recovery, according to the statement.

"I look forward to begin training and am focused on getting back out on tour," Woods said.

The year Woods last won at Torrey Pines is when back problems began to surface. He had his first microdiscectomy right before the 2014 Masters, and then he had two more in September and October of 2015. The fourth surgery in April 2017 was a major one, to fuse his lower spine. Woods' return was successful, leading to a victory in the 2018 Tour Championship — his first in five years — and he capped it off by winning the Masters in 2019, his 15th major and his first in 11 years.

When he won the Zozo Championship in Japan in

the fall of 2019, he tied Sam Snead's career victory record with No. 82, and the record seemed to be only a matter of time. But he was never in serious contention all of last year and missed a full month with a minor back issue before golf was shut down by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When he returned in July, he didn't finish better than a tie for 37th at the PGA Championship in seven tournaments he played. In six of those events where he made the cut, he finished a combined 107 shots out of the lead.

He turned 45 at the end of last year, and his surgery count is now up to 10 — five on his left knee, five on his back.

Woods said after he tied for

38th in his Masters title defense that he has days that are harder than others.

"My body just has moments where it just doesn't work like it used to," he said in November. "No matter how hard I try, things just don't work the way they used to, and no matter how much I push and ask of this body, it just doesn't work at times. Yes, it is more difficult than others to be motivated at times.

"Yes, because things just ache and have to deal with things that I've never had to deal with before."

He played the PNC Championship with his son and they finished seventh.

Woods plans to be at Riviera in his role as tournament host. The statement said only that he would miss



This Dec. 19, 2020, file photo shows Tiger Woods watching his tee shot on the first hole during the first round of the PNC Championship golf tournament, in Orlando, Fla.

Associated Press

Torrey Pines and Riviera. He has not been as predictable with his schedule in recent years leading to the Masters on April 8-11.

The World Golf Championships event recently played in Mexico has moved to Florida and follows the

West Coast Swing. Then it's Bay Hill, where Woods has won eight times (all before his back surgeries) but has skipped the last two years, and The Players Championship. There are three more tournaments after that before the Masters. □

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# Super Host? Bucs can become 1st to play Super Bowl at home

By **MARK LONG**  
AP Pro Football Writer

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers have a chance to make history at Green Bay on Sunday. If they do, it might come with an asterisk.

No team has ever played a Super Bowl in its home stadium. Tom Brady and the underdog Bucs (13-5) will try to become the first to do so by winning the NFC championship game against the Packers (14-3). The Super Bowl will take place two weeks later at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida.

It would be some feat for the wild-card Bucs to reach the NFL finale after playing three road playoff games. The prize would be much different this year, though, because the Super Bowl will be played in front of a far smaller crowd than usual. Tampa Bay averaged 14,483 fans for its eight home games in 2020 — about 22% of stadium capacity. The NFL is planning for 20% capacity at the Super Bowl on Feb. 7, according to ESPN. Fans will be in pods separated by 6 feet, and masks will be required in accordance with local COVID-19 safety protocols. Capacity at Raymond James Stadium is 65,890, so a little more than 13,000 fans are expected inside to finish a season played during a pandemic. It's a huge drop from the 75,000 that would have been expected with additional temporary bleachers in the end



**Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady (12) calls a play at the line of scrimmage against the New Orleans Saints during the second half of an NFL divisional round playoff football game, Sunday, Jan. 17, 2021, in New Orleans.**

zones. So if Tampa Bay advances to the big game, it won't gain a significant advantage by playing in front of its home crowd. Technically, it won't even be a sell-out, and the game would set an attendance record for the smallest Super Bowl crowd.

The first Super Bowl in 1967 was played in front of 61,946 fans at the Los Angeles Coliseum. It's the only one that didn't sell out. In the 53 Super Bowls since, just two teams have played the game in their home region: the 1984 San Francisco 49ers beat Miami in Super Bowl 19 in Stanford Stadium rather than Candlestick Park; and the 1979

Los Angeles Rams lost Super Bowl 14 to Pittsburgh in the Rose Bowl instead of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

Here's a look at the other NFL teams that made the playoffs the season their home stadiums hosted the Super Bowl and came up short:

— Minnesota, 2017  
Coming off the "Minnesota Miracle" at home against New Orleans — Stefon Diggs hauled in a 61-yard touchdown pass from Case Keenum on the final play — the Vikings traveled to Philadelphia for the NFC title game and got shellacked 38-7. Eagles backup Nick Foles threw for 352 yards and three touchdowns,

a sign of things to come in the Super Bowl against New England.

— Houston, 2016

The Texans won the AFC South and were the No. 4 seed heading into the AFC playoffs. They beat Oakland in a wild-card game but lost 34-16 the following week on the road to Brady and New England. It was quarterback Brock Osweiler's final start for Houston. Brady went on to win his fifth of six championships, this one in come-from-behind fashion after trailing Atlanta 28-3 late in the third quarter.

— Miami, 1998

The Dolphins were the No. 4 seed in the AFC and beat division rival Buffalo at

home to open the playoffs. They barely showed up the following week in Denver, getting smoked 38-3 by a team that featured four future Hall of Famers: quarterback John Elway, running back Terrell Davis, tight end Shannon Sharpe and safety Steve Atwater. Another Hall of Famer, Dan Marino, threw a pair of interceptions. Elway and the Broncos went on to claim their second straight championship.

— Miami, 1994

The Dolphins were the No. 3 seed four years earlier with the Super Bowl set to be played at Joe Robbie Stadium. They beat Kansas City to open the playoffs and traveled cross-country to face San Diego in the divisional round. Miami led 21-6 after Marino's third TD pass of the day just before half-time. But it was all Chargers from there. They scored 16 unanswered points in the second half, including the go-ahead touchdown with 35 seconds remaining. Pete Stoyanovich missed wide right from 48 yards out on Miami's final play. San Diego went on to beat Pittsburgh in the AFC title game before losing to juggernaut San Francisco in the Super Bowl in Miami.

— Miami, 1978

The Dolphins lost to Houston at home in a wild-card game, ending any chance they had of returning to the Orange Bowl for the Super Bowl. Pittsburgh beat Dallas for its third Vince Lombardi Trophy in five years. □

Associated Press

# Chiefs' Mahomes practices, remains in concussion protocol



**Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) is helped off the field by teammate Mike Remmers, right, after getting injured during the second half of an NFL divisional round football game against the Cleveland Browns, Sunday, Jan. 17, 2021, in Kansas City.**

By **DAVE SKRETTA**  
AP Sports Writer

**KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)** — Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes remains in the NFL's concussion protocol, but practiced in a limited capacity on Wednesday, raising hopes that the reigning Super Bowl MVP can play in Sunday's AFC title game against Buffalo. The Chiefs typically breeze through practice on Wednesday with little contact before ramping things up on Thursday, and coach

Andy Reid said that fit perfectly with what Mahomes was able to do.

Reid didn't say what phase of the five-step process Mahomes is in to be cleared to play, but the work he described his quarterback doing coincides with the fourth step. That involves a player resuming non-contact football activities, such as throwing and running, and is the final step before a player is deemed ready to go.

Mahomes was hurt in the

third quarter of last Sunday's 22-17 victory over the Cleveland Browns. Chad Henne finished the game and would be the starter if Mahomes was unable to play against the Bills. □

Associated Press